"All the Gnus That Fit, We Print"

The New York® Times

Weather: Thic fog, followed by brief but savage downpour.

VOL. 4. . . .No. 2 —SUMMER 1985— *INTERFERON EDITION*

New Release: A Mind Forever Voyaging

Items from Dr. Perleman's desk are contained in every A Mind Forever Voyaging *package.*

A Mind Forever Voyaging, the first advanced-level Science Fiction story from Infocom, is for true text-adventure buffs. Why? Because it has more locations to visit (several hundred), more things to do, more responses, and a large vocabulary (1800+ words) than any of our previously released products.

The story takes place in 21st-century Rockvil, South Dakota. The United States of North America has fallen prey to incredibly high unemployment and crime rates. Political indiffererence, perhaps caused by backward educational systems or diminishing national resources, has swept the nation. Exploiting this opportunity, Senator Richard Ryder has develop (*sic*) the Plan for a Renewed National Purpose, stressing patriotism and a return to American values as they were at the country's peak, the 1950s. The public, desperate for a change, embraces the Plan, but many high government officials are unsure whether it will succeed. That is where you come into the picture.

You are PRISM (Perelman-Randu Introductory Soliptic Machine); the first intelligent, self-aware computer. You have been created to enter a simulation of Rockvil, years in the future, and return with recordings of what life would be like if the Plan were to be introduced. While you're busy exploring the future, the scientists and programmers who created you are honing and perfecting the simulation's parameters. Thus, as the story progresses, you can travel further and further in time, watching Rockvil prosper as the Plan succeeds, or perish as it fails. Only you can tell on what course the country sets itself by adopting the Plan.

While there are several puzzles to keep players on their toes, designer Steve Meretzky (author of Planetfall and Sorcerer, and co-author of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy) concentrated more on immersing the player in a vast, highly detailed, realistic world; a vision of the destiny of mankind. *A Mind Forever Voyaging* represents Infocom's greatest step yet away from games, and toward true fiction: a serious, often chilling, look at the future of the human race, reminiscent of such great works of science fiction as *1984* or *Brave New World.*

What makes an epic game like this possible? Interactive fiction "plus", the latest development system from Infocom, designed to complement our currently-used "classic" system.

Continued on Page 3

Run For Your Lives! It's FOOBLITZKY

A Unique Graphics Strategy Game

Infocom? *Graphics?*

No, hell hasn't frozen over. Pigs haven't sprouted wings. But Infocom *is* announcing its first non-interactive fiction game — and it *does* have graphics.

"It's a hoax," you're thinking. "Infocom would never use graphics to illustrate locations in text adventures. Infocom hates graphics." Well, yes and no.

Infocom has yet to see computer graphics that add to the quality of a text adventure. There may be ways in which graphics could be used more subtly to enhance your mental imagery. But with today's machine resolutions, and even with proposed advancements in technology, graphics can't begin to compete with the scenes and characters you can imagine. Therefore, Infocom still firmly believes that words paint the most vivid images in your mind.

Of course, there *is* a place for graphics today: in a completely different setting and in a completely different kind of game. In fact, *Fooblitzky* is *all* graphics, and has more graphics in it than any other computer game on the market.

But the *really* important thing about any game is how much fun it is, how enjoyable it is to play, not whether it does or doesn't have graphics. And *Fooblitzky* is a winner. Already, there are addicts at Infocom.

Logic, deduction, chance, and social interaction are all big parts of *Fooblitzky* — just like deductive reasoning is a part of *Clue*® and *Mastermind*®. (*Fooblitzky* reminds some people of a cross between those games, even though its theme is completely different.) *Fooblitzky* is a *multiplayer* game — 2, 3, or 4 people can play. The name "Fooblitzky" was chosen because it's easy to remember and incredibly difficult to pronounce.

Okay, so the name is goofy. The *game* is goofy. But it's sophisticated goofiness.

The roots of *Fooblitzky* go back more than 2 years. Marc Blank and Michael Berlyn wanted to develop something unique, something totally different from text adventures — or any other kind of computer game. They hired a crazed crackerjack artist, Brian Cody, and a programming

Continued on Page 3

InfoNews Roundup

Wishbringer Event

This time it was not a mansion but a museum, there were no murders, no clues, not a puzzle to be solved. Not unless you found it a puzzling experience to have a good time. The event was the Wishbringer announcement, and a good time was had by all.

This party was held in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. And it was no coincidence that Summer CES was in Chicago as well. The press, distributors, and many of our own Infoployees (including *Wishbringer* implementor "Professor" Brian Moriarty) attended an evening of music, dancing, and the 3 p's: presentation, prizes, and pastries. Over 300 people joined us to celebrate the release of our 16th title.

Those who attended were treated to speeches from our Marc "Mark" Blank, Jon "Buckingham" Palace, Mike "Max the Knife" (Stan) Dornbrook, and even the professor himself. The presentation drew a standing-room-only crowd (thanks to Max, who was seen before the party removing the auditorium's 200 folding chairs!).

The party was more than anyone could have wished for, especially if you were one of the seven lucky prize winners. Infocom drew names from a crystal punch bowl to award

Continued on Page 3

Mail Bag

Dear Infocom:

What a great puzzle! I solved puzzle number 5 two days after receiving my latest copy of *The New Zork Times*, but I had to replay Zork II to determine whether "FEEL FREE" was in the Crypt Anteroom or the Crypt. I had made a *Zork II* map, but I loaned it out, and my friend lost it. He claimed a little guy with a beard and pointy hat just popped in, waved a wand, mumbled something like "Filch," and the map just vanished. The loss had occurred some time ago, and this current puzzle was just the motivation I needed to play the game again to remap *Zork II*'s world.

I must say, however, that I appreciate the definitive Infocom trivia encyclopedia the puzzle solution provides. Nobody I know had ever thought to count the leaves, and sure enough ... there are 69,105 (I went back and counted)! Other surprises (at least for me) were the folding cot, and the Linder's radio. It just once again proves why Infocom has the finest interactive fiction: attention to detail!

I've tried other adventure games, but as soon as the next Infocom adventure is available, they are forgotten and I am once again happily lost in another world of Infocom's making.

According to the statistics you've published, the number of people responding to the NZT puzzle is on the rise. Worse, the number of correct answers are also climbing. What chance does a 33 year old programmer from California have against all of those youngsters from around the country? Ah well, it really doesn't matter. I can, after all, afford a T-shirt. At least I still have my FrobozzCo stock options, but I do miss the fame and prestige that winning the NZT puzzles bestows on one.

Should you be hurting for good material to publish next issue, feel free to use this letter in your Mail Bag section or write me for a free brochure. The brochure tells about how I could write for *The New Zork Times*, work for Infocom, or create the next great American interactive fiction adventure.

Well, as the Wizard said: "Finish!"

In Frobs we trust (and so should you),

David Alan Hoag
Placentia, CA

You will notice that the number of entries was down this time. Also, don't forget that The New Zork Times Puzzle Winner T-shirts can't be bought — you must solve the puzzle to own one — Ed.

Hi,

I was really making progress on the NZT puzzle in the Winter issue. I have all the Infocom games and spent hours and hours researching the questions and filling in my grid. I had a ways to go but felt I was on the right track when I was called on to babysit a friend's cat.

To make a long story short, the cat, unknown to me, had a craving for graph paper and ate my almost complete grid. (She gave birth to a little of black and white checked kittens yesterday.)

I would like to make a comment on the gender of computer gamers. Many of us have names or nicknames that could either be male or female. I write to a lot of gamers and I find they usually assume I am male. After finding out I am definitely female they express surprise such as "I didn't know GIRLS PLAYED computer games!" Then when I tell them I am 49+ they are shocked almost to silence. I just hope by that time they realize I'm just as hooked on games as anyone else.

I suspect a lot of your Chris's, Leslie, Robins, Pats, etc. are female.

Looking forward to more puzzles and newsletters soon.

Pat Smith

Dear NZT:

I was shocked to see that in the article about music in the Great Underground Empire, there was no mention of one of the foremost GUE heavy metal bands, Mötley Grüe.

Lee Killpatrick
Houlton, ME

To the New Zork Times:

Seen on a truck on the Interstate in Arizona:

Zork Hardware Co.
El Paso, TX

Now there's *Zork* hardware to go with the *Zork* software? Love your games — keep 'em coming.

Susan Heller
Tuscon, AZ

Dear Sirs:

I was intrigued by your photo-feature, "Searching for the Relics of the Emu," which appeared in the Spring '85 issue of *The New Zork Times*. I look forward to seeing the proper photographs in your next issue. Incidentally, I recently participated in a research project at Hellspont Historical Institute which uncovered startling evidence that the Emus were NOT wiped out by the encroachment of western man, but were instead conquered by a race of malignant Yaks native to mountainous New Zealand. A fellow researcher proved this invasion possible by successfully traversing the treacherous between New Zealand and Tasmania in a coracle made entirely of spun Yak hair. The creatures the Europeans discovered were the sad remnants of their proud race, who quickly died of culture shock from exposure to gunpowder weapons, canvas, and "pick-a-path" game booklets (a primitive form of Interactive Fiction!). I hope this sets the record straight.

Stefan Jones
Lucust Valley, NY

Stardate 8411.04.

To the staff of the NZT, preferably Marc "Mark" Blank:

In reply to your "Call the Exterminators" article (NZT: vol. 3 #1) I believe I have found a bug, or at least a typo. In the Fortran IV translation of Zork for the PDP-11/V-11 (translated from MDL for the ARPANET), the dam tour guidebook claims that FCD#3 was composed of "3.7 cubic feet of concrete." To the best of my knowledge, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to take a lump of concrete measuring one foot by one foot by three point seven feet and build a structure the size of FCD#3. While on the topic of the guidebook, how come the present day versions of Zork I don't mention the work force of "384 slaves, 34 slave drivers, 12 engineers, 2 turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree" or the command team of "234 bureaucrats, 2,347 secretaries (at least two of whom could type), 12,256 paper shufflers, 52,469 rubber stampers, 245,193 red tape processors, and nearly one million dead trees?" Keep *The Times* coming.

Marc Egazarian
Blauvelt, NT

P.S. Would somebody mind writing The Hitchhiker's Guide for the TRS-80 Model III, please? Thanks.

(It may be impossible in the real world to build a dam with such a small piece of concrete, but this is a fantasy *remember? Actually, it was intended as a joke; it is not a typo. Ed.)*

The New Zork® Times

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Run, it's Fooblitzky

Continued From Page 1

magician, Poh C. Lim. More recently, Paula Maxwell joined the graphics group as an artist. Together they played board games, computer games, video games, mind games .... They discussed game theory: what made a game interesting, challenging, intricate, multifaceted, and replayable. And then they designed *Fooblitzky*.

People play against *each other* in *Fooblitzky*, not against some poor, misguided computer. The fun is in trying to bluff, outsmart, or just plain lie to the other players. Unless you're the multiple-personality type, you can't play *Fooblitzky* by yourself. (If you don't have any friends and your family is no longer returning your telephone calls, tough nuggies.)

Fooblitzky is intellectually challenging, requiring a sharp mind, careful note-taking, and a penchant for chattering teeth and flipping hot dogs. It's not a shoot-em-up arcade-style game requiring joystick coordination, so even adults can play! A game typically takes 1 to 2 hours to play.

Players move around the "city" of *Fooblitzky* on sidewalk squares, much like you move tokens around a board game. Players can buy items at stores with "foobles" (the unit of currency) and sell items at pawn shops and work in restaurants to get more foobles. Players can also get smacked by cars at street crossings, or get flashed by the Chance Man and squashed by a falling piano. Through all this, each player tries to deduce and then obtain the 4 "correct" items needed to win. Since the 4 items change each time you play, no 2 games are alike.

Fooblitzky is unlike any game you've ever played before. And Infocom is proud of that. *Fooblitzky* opens up new frontiers in computer gaming, and that's what Infocom is all about.

Fooblitzky is so different and innovative that Infocom's marketing department hit upon a different and innovative marketing approach. Because you're a special customer of Infocom's, because you read *The New Zork Times*, you can buy *Fooblitzky* before anyone else! Research shows that the people who learn *Fooblitzky* the fastest and enjoy it the most are the people who enjoy Infocom's interactive fiction the most.

Therefore, for a limited time, *Fooblitzky* is available ONLY through *The New Zork Times*. That's right: For the first six months, *Fooblitzky* is available exclusively to YOU, since you read *The New Zork Times*. Once you learn *Fooblitzky* and play it with your friends, you'll love it. You'll become an Infocom ambassador, spreading the word about *Fooblitzky*. When *Fooblitzky* is released to the rest of the world, everyone will have heard of it and will want the new game. But you don't have to wait: you can start enjoying the new game *now*.

A Mind Forever Voyaging

Continued From Page 1

"Plus" will be available for most machines that have 128K or more of internal RAM, allowing us to more than double the size of our products. In fact, the entire Zork trilogy could have fit into one game if we'd had the "plus" system at our disposal in 1981. Thus, large projects, like *A Mind Forever Voyaging*, are now entirely within our capabilities. Unlike the new Whopper®, or New Coke®, this revolutionary gaming technology promises to please the tastes of even the most discriminating player, allowing for more of just about everything (game bugs being no exception). Finally, this size increase should not be seen as "the beginning of the end" of our support for machines with under 128K of memory. Owners of smaller computers can rest assured that we will continue to produce plenty of products for their machines, using the "classic" system.

Meretzky began work on the project by writing a short, intriguing fictional piece, which introduces the player to the concept of artificial intelligence, as well as to the main characters and themes of the story. This short story, part of an issue of "Dakota Online Magazine," is found in the game package, along with the instruction manual, a full-color map of Rockvil, a "21st-century" plastic pen, and a Class One Security Mode Access Decoder.

InfoNews Roundup

Continued From Page 1

the prizes. These gifts each brought a real-life chance to experience one of *Wishbringer*'s seven magic wishes: binoculars for Foresight; a lucky Chinese gold coin for Luck; an all-weather camera for Rain; a twilight helicopter ride over Chicago for Flight, a crystal ball for Advice; a Sony Watchman for Freedom; and a telescope for Darkness. And the prizes didn't end there. Infocom also donated $2500 to "A Child's Wish Come True" — an organization that fulfills the wishes of children who are terminally ill. And if you think all these people were lucky, just imagine all the luck that your very own *Wishbringer* Magick stone will bring.…

Reviews

Suspect reviews have been turning up faster than clues for the murder of Veronica Ashcroft. *Suspect*, our latest murder mystery, shadowed by the overwhelming acclaim for Hitchhiker's has recently been receiving its well-deserved spot in the limelight. *A+* magazine said that "with this game, Infocom demonstrates (again) that the all-text adventure is ideal for a murder mystery .... What makes the game truly exciting are the more than ample opportunities for failure. You can really get yourself in a lot of trouble here." In another Apple interest magazine, "*Suspect* is another great mystery from Infocom, a company that seems unable to write a bad game." Congratulations to implementor P. David Lebling for adding yet another genre to his list of game writing fortes.

Speaking of overwhelming acclaim for Meretzky and Adams' collaboration (known affectionately as "HHGG"), we've chalked up another award to put in the trophy case (and there would be room if it weren't so full of those silly Zork I treasures). The W.H. Smoth Game of the Year Award was presented to Infocom for *Hitchhiker's* by The British Microcomputing Awards of 1985. All *New Zork Times* subscribers were invited to attend the award ceremony which took place on June 12th in London. Unfortunately, the person assigned to the mailing of the invitations was busy trying to get by a tiny vicious poodle; consequently, we were unable to mail the invitations in time. The person responsible for this error has since been sacked!

And if you haven't gotten past the aforementioned poodle yourself, then you probably haven't played our latest title, *Wishbringer*. The reviews for the first game by "Professor" Brian Moriarty have been nothing short of glowing, but don't take our word for it. *Computer Entertainment* says that *Wishbringer* is "a great introduction for newcomers to the Adventure Experience, and is suitable for all ages." The praise extends well beyond the puzzles of the game, characterizing Moriarty's writing style as carrying "a fondness for Lovecraft, Hawthorne, and things that go bump in the night."

New News at Infrobozz

Can you name the sixteen software titles that run on the new Atari ST? If not, we'll give you a hint: *Zork I, Zork II, Zork III, Deadline* ... and *Wishbringer.* Thanks to the Micro Group (that nutty bunch of microscopic programmers) the Atari ST will NOT be the hot new machine with NO software to brag about. And keep your eyes peeled (doesn't that hurt?) for the Amiga? Can you name sixteen software titles that run on the Amiga???

The History of Zork — The Final (?)

by Stu Galley
SPECIAL TO The New Zork Times

The year: 1979. As Tim Anderson has recounted in previous installments in this series, Zork was one large computer game, about a megabyte in size — as large as it could be and still fit in its original home, a DECsystem-10. Marc Blank and Dave Lebling designed and wrote the program, with the help of Bruce Daniels and Tim. They had met and worked together in a research group at M.I.T., and now the group was losing valuable talent through graduation and the lure of "the real world." Several members of the group believed that they could still produce outstanding computer-based products in almost any category — from programming languages like MDL (an important influence on modern Lisp) to data bases, electronic mail and artificially intelligent systems — if only centrifugal force didn't separate them.

The problem: What sort of product could the group work on together, and to whom could they sell it? As early as 1976, they had discussed the potential marketability of various computer games that had been designed or implemented by group members just for fun. Now their attention was focused on various potential products based on mini-computers, some involving custom hardware as well as software. The group was ignoring the potential of a mass market for micro-computers, not only from lack of experience with them (the group's unofficial motto is "We hate micros!") but also from serious concerns about software piracy.

Joel Berez had graduated from the group and was working in his family's business in Pittsburgh. Marc had finished medical school (and moonlighting on *Zork* development) and was starting his medical residency in Pittsburgh. These two had long been friends, and they liked getting together for a Chinese dinner and conversation.

One topic of conversation was "the good old days" at M.I.T., and one reason that the old days were good was Zork. They wished that *Zork's* wonderfulness (or "taste and winnage" in M.I.T. jargon) could somehow be brought to more people. But very few people had access to the large computers that could run *Zork*. More and more people were beginning to buy personal computers — like the Radio Shack TRS-80 Model I or the Apple II — but those computers were too small to run *Zork*. Or were they?

Joel and Marc began some seat-of-the-pants design work (much of it on Joel's parents' coffee table) on how much *Zork* could be compressed, and how to do so in a flexible way to allow for different, incompatible personal computers in the future. They considered using available "portable" tools for programming, like UCSD Pascal, but it soon became clear that *Zork* had too much text in it. (Keep in mind that a standard personal computer at this time came with 16K bytes of memory and no disk drive.) They finally concluded that, by inventing a programming system specifically for *Zork*, they could fit about half of it into a computer with 32K bytes of memory and one floppy-disk drive.

Meanwhile, the group at M.I.T. was in the process of forming a corporation — choosing "Infocom" as the name least offensive to everyone — and searching for a project that would quickly produce a product to start generating income for the company. Among the projects they considered were systems for keeping track of documents, handling electronic correspondence, and processing text. When *Zork* was added to the list of possibilities, Joel and Marc worked intensively during the summer and autumn creating the programming tools for their design. And they had to work for IOUs, since the company treasury — which started with only $11,500 — could afford to pay only for the hardware they needed at the time.

The key to their design was an imaginary computer chip called the "Z-machine". This chip would be able to run *Zork* (or at least part of it) if the program were coded in a special, very compact language. Then the design called for each personal computer to have a program (called a Z-machine Interpreter Program or ZIP) that would interpret the special Z-machine language and make the computer act the same way that a real Z-machine would. In order to get *Zork* written in this special language, another language was invented, called *Zork* Implementation Language (ZIL), similar in many ways to MDL. Marc built a two-stage translator program that would translate a ZIL program, first into an assembly language and then further into the Z-machine language. He also built a ZIP so that a DECsystem-20 could emulate the Z-machine.

There was still the problem of cutting *Zork* in half. Dave examined his complete map of *Zork* and drew a boundary around a portion that included about 100 or so locations: everything "above ground" and a large section surrounding the Round Room. The object was to create a smaller *Zork* that would fit within the constraints established by the design of Joel and Marc. Whatever wouldn't fit was to be saved for another game, another day.

In the process of being converted from MDL into ZIL, the program became "cleaner" and friendlier. The geographies of the maze and the coal mine were simplified so that the connections were less arbitrary, and in other places complexity was removed whenever it didn't serve a justifiable purpose. For example, there was originally a barrel sitting near the top of Aragain Falls, but it was just a red herring; its only purpose was to lure unsuspecting adventurers inside and carry them over the falls to destruction. The Rainbow Room had its name changed to On the Rainbow, and that meant removing the silly joke about Rockefeller Center and the NBC Commissary. Since the Land of the (Living) Dead (the word "Living" was removed in order to fit the name on the status line) no longer led to the stairway where Zork III later began, the crystal skull (a brand-new treasure) was put there instead.

By late 1979, Joel and Marc had both moved back to Boston. Joel had been elected president of Infocom and started business school, and Zork I was shaping up as Infocom's first product. *Zork I* first saw the light of day on a DEC-system-20 on which the company was renting time, then on the PDP-11 in Joel's bedroom. Scott Cutler (who had graduated from the group a couple of years before) used his TRS-80 Model II to create a ZIP for a TRS-80 Model I. As 1980 dawned, Infocom spent a large portion of its bank account to purchase a Model I, and Scott and Marc demonstrated that *Zork I* was alive in it by starting the game and actually collecting points with the incantation "N. E. OPEN. IN." (It's certainly no less inspiring than "Come here, Mr. Watson; I want you!")

We had another product in which PS had no interest: the PDP-11 version of *Zork I*. We sent product announcements to various places, including a newsletter for PDP-11 users, and as a result, the first copy of *Zork I* sold was a PDP-11 version! It came on an eight-inch floppy disk with a manual that I wrote and Joel had reproduced from a typewritten master.

By the end of 1980, the version of ZIP for the Apple II had been created by Bruce, who had designed puzzles for the original *Zork* before graduating from M.I.T. and going to work for Apple Computer Inc. Apple *Zork I* proved more popular than the TRS-80 version; PS sold over 6000 copies in eight months.

The first press reviews of *Zork I* were encouraging. In February 1981, BYTE magazine said, "No single advance in the science of Adventure has been as bold and exciting as the introduction of Personal Software Inc.'s *Zork, The Great Underground Empire*. . . . That the program is entertaining, eloquent, witty, and precisely written is almost beside the point. Unlike the kingdoms of the Adventures for machines with 16K

Chapter: MIT, MDL, ZIL, ZIP

bytes of memory and far from the classic counter-earthiness of the Colossal Cave in the original Adventure, *Zork* can be felt and touched — experienced, if you will — through the care and attention to detail the authors have rendered. ... [A] most excellent and memorable work of computerized fiction."

Mike Dornbrook was enlisted to test *Zork I* for bugs and other bad features, because he had some experience with computers but no experience with the original *Zork*, exactly like our intended audience. (One of his contributions was the alternate — and, some say, more logical — solution to the Loud Room puzzle, which was added only after the first users of *Zork I* asked so often for hints for that puzzle). He played it so much that he memorized the entire geography, and he fell in love with the game. He was convinced that it would attract a cult following, although others thought it would last maybe a year on the market and then fade away, like a video game. He urged the company to start planning spin-off products, like maps, hints, posters, T-shirts, etc. So the first published release of *Zork I* had another feature added, a "small piece of paper" in the artist's studio that said something like "Write to Infocom, P.O. Box 120, Cambridge, Mass. 02142 for info on other products, including Movement Assistance Planners (M.A.P.s) and Hierarchical Information for Novice Treasure Seekers (H.I.N.T.S.)." Besides leaving the door open for an after-market in *Zork* accessories, we wanted to start building a mailing list of customers for future direct mailings (like the one you are reading!).

Meanwhile, Dave was designing Zork II. At first, the most straightforward approach seemed to be to use everything left out of *Zork I* and simply convert it from MDL to ZIL. But Dave's active imagination kept inventing new puzzles that virtually begged to be implemented. So the final design left out the Royal Puzzle and the "end-game" (both to appear in *Zork III*) and instead included the Wizard of Frobozz, the garden, and the new diamond maze. (The last was re-oriented to the compass based on Mike's belief that "southpaw" should be a hint.) The last of the original puzzles — the long slide and "sending for the brochure" — were left out of *Zork III* and didn't reappear until *Sorcerer*.

Mike Dornbrook was enlisted again to fulfill mail orders for personalized hints. Joel collected orders from the post office box, passed orders for maps and posters to his Significant Other for fulfillment, gave requests for hints to Mike, and gave me the numerous small checks to deposit in the bank. Mike created personalized hints off the top of his head, typing them on an old office typewriter. (When Mike started business school in September 1981, he founded a separate company, the Zork User's Group, and took over all mail-order sales. Only then did he computerize the operation. In 1983, Mike came back to work for Infocom, bringing Z.U.G. with him.)

Now that the company had a flesh-and-blood product, how could a small group of hackers market and sell it? One possibility was to produce it ourselves and distribute it through computer chain stores. But that meant devoting time and energy to finding suppliers, producing packages, supporting users, and so on. Another possibility was to contract with a software publisher, but which one? Joel contacted Microsoft, but they were already publishing the original "Colossal Cave" adventure game — the one that inspired *Zork* — and by the time *Zork* fan Bill Gates heard of our offer, Infocom was deep in negotiations with Personal Software Inc. (PS).

PS had several good features: it was the first true publisher of software developed by others; it was the leading publisher of computer games at the time; and it had strong ties to Software Arts Inc., where VisiCalc was invented (*requiescant in pace*), and where *Zork I* was demonstrated in February 1980. PS agreed in June to publish *Zork I* and sent us an advance on royalties, our first bonafide income! Sales began in December, and over the next nine months PS sold about 1500 copies of the TRS-80 version*.

Also in June, we paid for a search of trademark records in preparation for registering "Zork" as our own trademark. We discovered that Mattel Inc. had registered "Mighty Zork" in 1973 for a toy model motorcycle, but that registration was cancelled in October 1979. Other trademarks discovered in the search were the likes of Zorr, Zorak, Zark, and Zowees (all by Mattel); Zogg, Zon, Zak, Zok, Zot, Zonk, and Zerak; and variations on Mork and Ork (by Paramount Pictures). Not to mention the Zork Hardware Company of El Paso and Albuquerque.

Zork II was offered to PS in April and licensed in June 1981, about the same time that Joel graduated and became Infocom's first salaried employee. But we had serious concerns about PS's commitment, even to *Zork I*. After an initial rush of advertising, *Zork I* seemed to join PS's range of products as just another game. We were eager to make new versions and new titles — including *Zork III*, "Zork: the Mystery"(Deadline), and "Zorks in Space" (Starcross) — but not if our publisher wasn't also eager. The fact was that PS was planning to drop its line of entertainment software — since their titles neither sold well over the long term nor brought in enough money to satisfy them — and to change its name to Visicorp in order to identify closely with its "Visi-" series of business products**.

It now appeared that we had two choices: to negotiate and contract with another publisher (and to hope for more satisfaction), or to take the plunge and *become* a publisher. We definitely preferred the second choice, but that required office space, production facilities, an advertising agency, and so on — and most of all, money. But we threw caution to the wind, and hired Mort Rosenthal (who later founded Corporate Software Inc.) as marketing manager, who found a time-shared office in Boston's venerable Faneuil Hall Marketplace, a time-shared production plant in Randolph, an ad agency in Watertown, an order-taking service in New Jersey, a supplier of disks in California, and so on. The money came both from the company's founders and from a bank loan that they personally guaranteed.

We announced *Zork II* and our new role as publisher with a Christmas promotion as eye-catching as we could afford. Thanks to our ad agency, we had a new style of packaging for both *Zorks* (the stone-built letters that are still in use), a counter display for stores, ads in major computer magazines, and direct-mail ads for dealers. We also bought PS's entire inventory of *Zork I* (except the TRS-80 version, which they still wanted to sell) to prevent them from "dumping" it on the market at bargain prices and lowering the public's image of "Zork" in general. Our first shipment went out just in time for Christmas sales.

On New Year's Day 1982, we moved the company to larger space at the far end of Cambridge — 55 Wheeler Street. Now we had office space for everyone, especially for Marc (now vice-president for product development) to finish *Zork III*. And we had enough space to set up all the personal computers — instead of shuffling them from one person's home to another — for testers to use, and for programmers to create or adapt ZIPs for Atari, CP/M, IBM PC, and other machines. *Zork III* was finished in the autumn, about the same time that the company began hiring people to begin developing its first business product. But that's another story. Z

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* *Zork I* came under the wing of PS's New Products Manager, a fellow named Mitch Kapor, who later founded Lotus Development Corp.

** In December 1984, after a long legal tangle with Software Arts over VisiCalc, Visicorp eventually merged into one of its own spin-off companies and disappeared.

Third Title for '85 Coming Soon

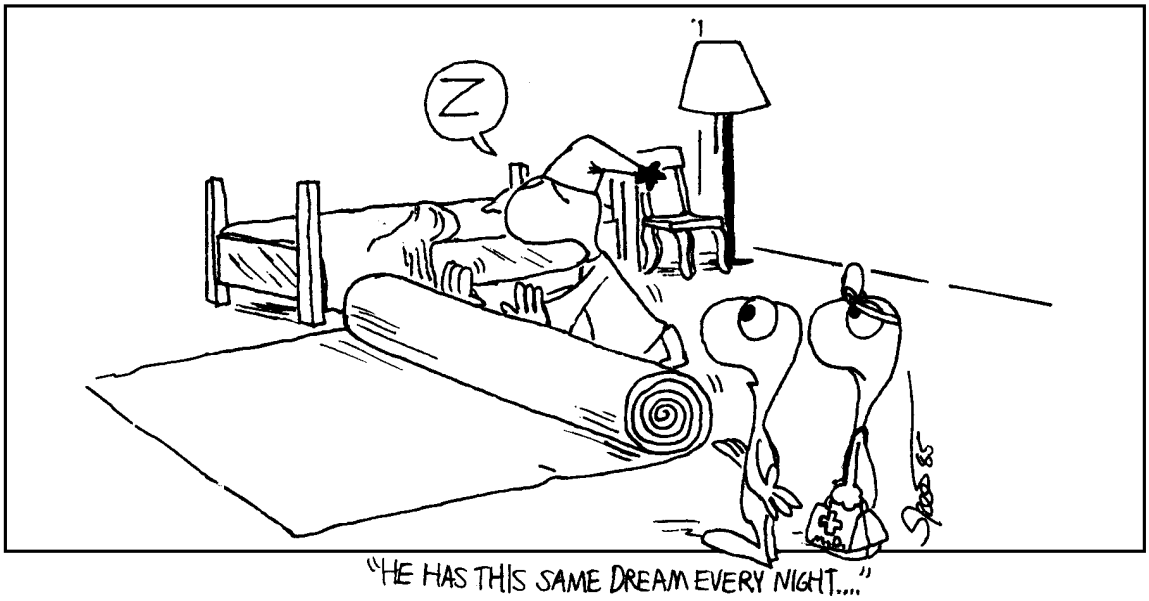
At Infocom, we believe that good things come in threes. Our third interactive fiction story this year will be one of those things. It's for those of you who are two-thirds done with our second trilogy. It's for those of you who want something three times harder than Sorcerer, or three times more exciting than Enchanter. It's for those of you who want to know if there's life after AIMFIZ.

Dave Lebling, co-author of the Zork trilogy and *Enchanter*, has been spied writing spell scrolls, polishing his crystal ball, and muttering incomprehensible syllables under his breath. What it all means, only time (and the next issue of *The New Zork Times*) will tell.

Yak Facts.

Did you know that...

- when overloaded or exhausted, the yak will lie down, hiss, spit and kick, and refuse to move?
- when asked "What is your favorite mammal," 5 out of 7 game writers did NOT choose the yak? (Significantly, when asked the same question, 7 out of 7 yaks did not choose game writers.)
- no yak in captivity has ever lived more than 3 weeks, although wild yaks have a life span of over 90 years?
- the silent, black-and-white, 1922 version of *The Wizard of Oz* featured a cowardly yak instead of a cowardly lion? ("Yaks and tigers and bears, oh my!")
- the hair of wild yak is black and short, except on the flanks and tail where it forms a long, shaggy fringe?
- a newborn yak is called a yaklet and usually arrives in a litter of 30 or more?
- domestic yaks, which breed freely with domestic cattle, are often piebald black and white?
- *The Witness* author Stu Galley is a former yak trainer?
- wild yaks live in large herds of females, young bulls, and calves (the mature bulls staying together in smaller groups)?



NZT Cartoon Winner

Among the many amusing and well-drawn cartoons submitted for this issue's cartoon contest, the eventual winner is the work of Andy "Inksipper" Speer of Waltham, Massachusetts. He receives a copy of Planetfall for his Commodore 64 and our congratulation. If you dare to take on the competition and cross pens with your Infocom brethren, and are fortunate enough to win, your prize will be a free Infocom game of your choice.

Here are the rules. Cartoons will be printed approximately 4 1/4 inches wide by 5 inches deep, so draw your cartoons proportionally. Entries must be in black ink (not in pencil or in color) on white unlined paper. Do not fold your entries. All submissions become the property of Infocom, Inc. Be sure to send your cartoon to:

NZT Cartoons, Infocom, Inc., 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140. And don't forget to include a separate sheet that tells us who you are, what game you wish to win, your computer system, and where you live.

They're back; C-64 versions compatible with C-128 machines

At Infocom, we believe that good things come in threes. Our third interactive fiction story this year will be one of those things. It's for those of you who are two-thirds done with our second trilogy. It's for those of you who want something three times harder incomprehensible syllables under his breath. What it all means, only time (and the next issue of *The New Zork Times*) will tell.

CORRECTION

SORRY! Due to space restrictions, we are unable to run the photo essay "Searching for the Relics of the Emu" in this issue. We hope to find enough room in a forthcoming issue to run this interesting and provocative feature.

Puzzle Number 5 Winners

Once again our incorruptible random number generator selected 25 lucky T-shirt winners:

1. Thomas Anthony Dingbaum
   Millersville, MD
2. David Gleeson
   Van Nuys, CA
3. Judy Bezzone
   Sacto, CA
4. David Bennett
   Bexley, OH
5. Ruth Anderson-Barnett
   San Diego, CA
6. David Gatewood
   Charlottesville, VA
7. Jeff Williams
   Nashville, TN
8. Dave Kassing
   Gresham, OR
9. Tom "Floyd" Wright
   Midland, MI
10. Amy Hinshaw
    Loma Linda, CA
11. Gary Laskowski
    Roseville, MI
12. Mark Hausherr
    Duxbury, MA
13. William Frenchu
    Hopewell, NJ
14. Robert Dionne
    Port Jefferson Station, NY
15. P. DeGano
    Grand Terrace, CA
16. Ray Burton III
    Roseville, CA
17. Brandy Brooks
    Lynchburg, VA
18. Greg Swieringa
    Anoka, MN
19. Bruce Stedwell
    Lake Havasu City, AZ
20. Andy Plotkin
    Rockville, MD
21. Larry Pedersen
    Atlanta, GA
22. Fred Nemec
    Tustin, CA
23. Ted Murach
    Western Springs, IL
24. Michael McSurley
    Wilmington, DE
25. Mike Lipinsky
    Millers Falls, MA

Interactive Softball: > LOOK AROUND

You are standing in an open field west of a white plate. There is a catcher here.

The late afternoon sun is a fiery orange ball on the horizon.

> INVENTORY
You have:
a bat
a Hawaiian shirt (being worn)
your heart (also being worn, on your sleeve)

> WHO AM I?
You are southpaw vice president Marc Blank. The shirt is the mock-touristy uniform, and the heart's in the right place (not a bug) because what is at stake here is no less than the bragging rights to the Eastcoast Software Softball Leage.

Off to the north, the pitcher lobs an arching white ball in your direction.

Okay, Marc, what do you want to do now?

> SWING AT BALL (go to paragraph A)

> TAKE THE PITCH (go to paragraph B)

It's one of those tea kettle days in summer when Massachusetts might as well be spelled M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i. Infocom vs. Lotus. Lotus is like New England weather. Can't make up their minds. Half dozen of their guys show up. They import some of ours; the game's for fun, evidenced by the ice chest, which is overfull.

> WHO AM I?
You are "Hollywood" Dave Anderson, HDA for short, which you're not. No, you tower over most trolls and second basemen. And, forsooth, you have a not undeserved reputation as a slugger, be it leaning over a bar or leaning over home plate. For the moment it's the latter: You're the batter. But this time something goes awry. Maybe it was the too-poor grip on the bat. Maybe it was a too-firm grip on the beer can. You sent a lil' nubber up along the third base line.

First base is northeast of here, and you can see the ice chest to the east.

Ok, Hollywood, what do you want to do now?

> RUN NORTHEAST (go to paragraph C)

> WALK EAST THEN EMPTY THE ICE CHEST THEN ENJOY THE BEER (go to paragraph D)

You're sitting in the cool shade of a large drooping tree that dwarfs the sidelines between first and home. The home team is up to bat.

A teammate dribbles a grounder to third. There is a play at first. Or rather there would have been a play had the first baseman's foot not been pulled off the bag by a wild throw. The runner is safe. Or is she? The opposing team collapses upon first base like an implosion, eager to make the unbiased call of "Out!"

> WHO AM I TO ARGUE THE CALL?
You are David "Julio" Cavallo. Alternatively, Crazy Legs. You are thief-like on the basepaths. With a Cyclops hunger at the plate. But these better than standard-level skills mean vastly more than mere personal glory on the field. Yes, they mean job security. No, that's the cynic talking. Talent translates into opportunity for pride in the name of Infocom.

Okay, Julio, what do you want to do now?

> ARGUE THE CALL (go to paragraph E)

> CALL OFF THE ARGUMENT (go to paragraph F)

A. Which ball do you mean, the white ball or the fiery orange ball?

(I assume you mean the white ball.)
Slash! The shaft of your bat connects with the pitch! But since this is softball and not mortal combat, you merely send a harmless pop-up into the field. Walking to the bench, you mutter something about KNOWING better than to have swung at the first pitch.

*** You have flied out ***
Better luck next at-bat.

B. Taken.

Your patience pays off, as on the next pitch you watch the right fielder stopping short of the fence as the ball sails over it. (Your score just went up by 1 run! You now have 3 runs out of an eventual 14.)

C. You race toward the bag, colliding with the first baseman. There is an awful "crunch!" For a moment everything becomes ... Dark

You can feel nothing, hear nothing, see nothing, smell nothing, taste nothing and you don't even know your own batting average.

> I
You have:
broken your nose in 4 places

D. You wisely amble over toward the ice chest, shrugging your shoulders while keeping your head held high, "a trick few people can do, as it requires a lot of technically complex deltoid muscle work." Like stealing signs from the opposing catcher, a teammate reads your mind, tossing a cool one in your direction. It goes down well.

E. Since you were right on top of the play, credibility is yours. The man's foot was three car lengths off the bag. Not even in the same area code. The other team argues that "proximity" and "informality" somehow equals "out." Proximity: Sure, in the same sense Hawaii is a contiguous state. In the same sense that the space shuttle is "on the pad" half an hour after liftoff. The "informality" argument itself breaks down, analogous to a "fight for peace."

F. Just as well. Losing the battle hastens the winning of the war. Hail Infocom, victors deserved! Ending the regular season and starting the playoffs, the team is leading the league with a record of 7-1, having bested the likes of Lotus, Spinniker, et al. Hail Infocom, indeed. Z

(Left) Deep in the hole at short, Jeff O'Neill scoops up a hard-hit grounder. (Right) Max Buxton, Gayle Syska, Linda Mazzota, Spencer Steere and Renata Sorkin enjoy the game while Andrew Kaluzniacki takes a bite of Liz Cyr-Jones' arm. Coach Hollywood Dave Anderson, who frowns on intra-team cannibalism, looks away. In the background is Chris Gugger's '77 Plymouth Grand Fury.

NEW ZORK TIMES PUZZLE NUMBER 7

This puzzle is based entirely on information in the game packages themselves. The following phrases correspond to numbers, and are arranged in numerical order by those numbers. Except — one is out of order. The correct answer is the letter or double-letter of the phrase that is out of numerical order.

A. Seconds a hellhound takes to devour a human twelve times its size.

B. In the Local History Series, the number of "The Legend of Wishbringer."

C. Number of Ensign Lim's planet in the Ash-Down system.

D. "Foreign" newsstand price of *Popular Enchanting*, in Zorkmids.

E. Row of the postal grid where the poodle is located.

F. Number, in the S-513 series, of the Ultramarine Bioceptor drawing.

G. Number of questions that Detective Anderson asked Leslie Robner.

H. Nate's price for dragon scales, in zorkmids.

I. Your SW Contra sector number.

J. Length of the GUE Tech magic course, in weeks.

K. Length, in days, of Ellingsworth's trip from El Menhir to the campsite.

L. Age of the knight who was sent to Lord Nimbus.

M. Depth of the Frobton Bay shipping channel, in meters.

N. Length of the Linder marriage, in years.

O. Grotches produce this amount time their weight in trot each day.

P. Page number that "There Goes the Neighborhood" article begins on.

Q. Length of the *Mary Margaret*, in feet.

R. Volume of Ellingsworth's hieroglyphic cube, in cubic inches.

S. Number of pocket calculator functions on a Mark IV with that option.

T. Amount of Outfitters International's price increase for diving cages.

U. Monthly subscription rate for the Santa Ana *Register*, in 1938 pennies.

V. Price of special delivery to Festeron.

W. Phi value of AX01 at the time the mass detector output was made.

X. Arthur's street number on Country Lane.

Y. Marshall Robner's weight, in pounds, at the time of his death.

Z. Model number of Joo Janta's Super-Chromatic Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses.

AA. Number of pounds lost by several *National Inquisitor* staffers.

BB. Street number on Wisconsin Avenue of Costumes Unlimited.

CC. Depth of the *HMS Intransigent* wreck.

DD. Outfitters International's street number on Wharf Road.

EE. Number of years that Gregory Franklin served as Central Mentality.

FF. Number of thrills awaiting you on "The Galaxy's Playground," Accardi-3.

GG. ADeline-exchange phone number of the Brass Lantern restaurant.

HH. Excelsior Tower suite number of Coates, Shavely & Coats.

II. Turgid Eddy's post office box number.

JJ. Year that the *Sao Vera* sank.

KK. Year that King's Point Realty was founded.

LL. Year of the *Fianna*'s shipwreck.

MM. Year of the unsuccessful Ellingsworth expedition.

NN. Publication year of "Four Shipwrecks Off Hardscrabble Island."

OO. Zip code of Rose Ellingsworth.

PP. Receipt number for cowboy costume.

QQ. Linder's street address on Lyman Drive.

RR. William Cochrane's business zip code.

SS. The "zip code" of the Magick Shoppe, with hyphens removed.

ANSWER: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

T-shirt Size (S, M, L, XL): _____

CONTEST RULES:

1. All entries must be submitted on this form. No copies accepted.
2. All entries must be received by November 1, 1985.
3. Up to 25 prizes will be awarded. If more than 25 correct answers are received, a drawing will be held to determine the winners. Void where prohibited by law.

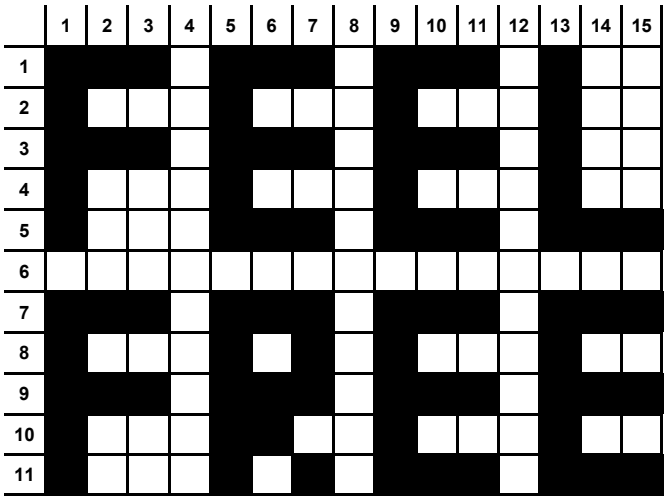
PRIZE:

A *New Zork Times* Puzzle Winner T-Shirt

RETURN TO: Infocom
NZT Puzzle
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

Solution to NZT Puzzle Number Five

Puzzle Five produced a fairly low number of entries for an admittedly "Expert Level" puzzle, but most of the entries we received were correct. If you answered the 165 True-False questions correctly, and blackened the corresponding squares on your grid, you would have wound up with the following graphic:



This is the message over the doorway in the Crypt Anteroom in *Zork II.*

There were exactly 100 entries, of which 70 were correct. For the six people who answered "Crypt" — close, but no cigar. The most common wrong answer was the Royal Puzzle from *Zork III.* Many of the wrong answers were understandable: the Maze in *Zork I,* the Map Room in *Enchanter,* the Dark in *Hitchhiker's.* Other wrong answers were very cryptic: the Burial Chamber in *Infidel,* Forest Path in *Zork I,* Shuttle Car Betty in *Planetfall,* and the Tool Shed in *Deadline.*